

E 407

.B41

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00005030419





SPEECH

OF

HON. HENRY BEDINGER, OF VIRGINIA,

ON

THE PRESIDENT'S SPECIAL MESSAGE.

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, TUESDAY, JANUARY 25, 1848.

25. 10



WASHINGTON:
PRINTED AT THE CONGRESSIONAL GLOBE OFFICE.
1848.

E407
B41

INSTRUCTIONS TO MR. SLIDELL.

The House having resolved itself into Committee of the Whole upon the state of the Union, upon the Special Message of the President of the United States, in reply to the following Resolution of the House of 4th January :

“Resolved, That the President of the United States be requested to communicate to this House any instructions which may have been given to any of the officers of the army or navy of the United States, or other persons, in regard to the return of President General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, or any other Mexican, to the Republic of Mexico, prior or subsequent to the order of the President or Secretary of War, issued in January, 1845, for the march of the army from the Nueces river, across the ‘stupendous deserts’ which intervene, to the Rio Grande; that the date of all such instructions, orders, and correspondence, be set forth, together with the instructions and orders issued to Mr. Slidell at any time prior or subsequent to his departure for Mexico as Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States to that Republic :”

Mr. BEDINGER addressed the committee as follows:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I am not certain that the remarks which I have to make this morning will occupy the whole of the hour allotted to me. I should be well pleased, if I could have it in my power to express, upon this occasion, some views and opinions upon our present contest with Mexico, and upon the contemplated policy of our Government towards that Republic. But, captivated as I have been by the illustrious examples afforded me by certain gentlemen on the opposite side of the House, I shall feel compelled to postpone to some future day the remarks which I had to make upon that subject, and confine myself principally to the recent message of the President, sent to this House, in answer to our resolution calling upon him to furnish us with certain information, &c., concerning our relations with Mexico. I believe that I was one of those who voted for that resolution; and I did so, because I had all confidence in the prudence and discretion of the Executive, and because I did not choose to rest under the imputation of being afraid even to ask the President for the information called for by that resolution.

It is true, sir, I should have preferred that the usual clause of reservation should have been inserted in the resolution. But I chose to vote for it even without that clause, rather than vote against it. I preferred that it should pass in the shape it did, rather than not pass at all; because I felt very certain that the President would cheerfully furnish to Congress any information in his power which he did not deem incompatible with his duty and

with the best interests of the country to promulgate. And it seems that I was not mistaken, either in my estimate of the prudence and discretion of the Executive, or of his willingness to furnish to Congress, in obedience to its call, all the information which a strict regard to his duty would permit him. He has furnished us with everything which he deemed it prudent or wise to publish at this time. He has told us why it was that Santa Anna was permitted to pass through our blockading squadron on his return to Mexico. He has referred us to his annual message of December, 1846, in which all the facts connected with Santa Anna's return are fairly set forth, and all the reasons which led to that stroke of policy frankly given. He tells us, moreover, how it was that Paredes eluded the vigilance of our forces, and made his way into Mexico, upon his return from Europe. But he declines to comply with that portion of the call which demands “the instructions and orders issued to Mr. Slidell, at any time prior or subsequent to his departure for Mexico, as minister plenipotentiary of the United States to that Republic.” With this portion of the demand of Congress, the President thinks his duty and the interests of the country forbid him to comply, and he gives us his reasons at length for declining to comply—quoting, in support of them, the example of Washington. And, sir, I think I shall be able to show, before I take my seat, that the President has acted with wisdom and prudence, as well as with deference and respect to the House. And I feel convinced, notwithstanding the tremendous outbreak of affected indignation with which the Opposition have attacked his action in this matter—notwithstanding the surprise manifested by the gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. ADAMS,] who ventured the opinion that it was the “very first time in the history of the Union that such a call had been denied”—notwithstanding the violent attack of the gentleman from Mississippi, [Mr. TOMPKINS,] who affects to stand aghast at the unexampled conduct of the President—notwithstanding all the fluttering which this Executive bomb-shell has occasioned among the gentlemen on the other side of the House,—I feel convinced that the people, and the world in general, will justify the conduct of the Executive, because they will perceive at a glance that he could not possibly have acted otherwise than he did, and retained the slightest reputation for prudence and statesmanship, or even for common sense. The gentleman from Massachusetts

thinks the President's conduct without a precedent in the history of the Union; but, sir, I think I shall be able to show that he is sustained by the example of more than one of his illustrious predecessors.

The examples of Washington and Monroe have already been quoted; but as these seem to be regarded by the present revilers of the Executive as rather indifferent authority, I think it possible I shall be able to furnish them with a precedent rather better suited to their tastes. Sir, I am no great ransacker of records—no great rooter-up of reminiscences. I do not care to waste my time in the barren search after precedents in cases where reason and common sense must inevitably lead to conviction without them. But upon this occasion I did take the trouble to rummage a little among the volumes of the House Library, and for once my search was not entirely fruitless, for there I found a very curious document—one, in my opinion, particularly applicable to the present discussion—and which, with the permission of this committee, I will read to them. I read from Gales & Seaton's Congressional Debates, vol. 2, page 174, from a speech delivered by the Hon. Mr. Hayne, of South Carolina, in the Senate of the United States, on the far-famed Panama mission. Mr. Hayne goes on to say:

"The next important step in our proceedings on this subject was the resolution passed by the Senate on the 15th February, 'that the question ought to be discussed with open doors,' unless the publication of the documents would be 'prejudicial to pending negotiations,' and on this point information was respectfully requested of the Executive, the officer charged with all our negotiations. To this resolution the President replied in the following message:

"WASHINGTON, February 16, 1826.

"To the Senate of the United States:

"In answer to the two resolutions of the Senate of the 15th instant, marked Executive, and which I have received, I state respectfully, that all the communications from me to the Senate relating to the Congress at Panama have been made, like all other communications upon Executive business, in confidence, and most of them in compliance with a resolution of the Senate requesting them confidentially. Believing that the established usage of free confidential communications between the Executive and the Senate ought, for the public interest, to be preserved unimpaired, I deem it my indispensable duty to leave to the Senate itself the decision of a question involving a departure hitherto, so far as I am informed, without example, from that usage, and upon the motives for which, not being informed of them, I do not feel myself competent to decide.

"JOHN QUINCY ADAMS."

"The plain and obvious meaning of this message," continued Mr. Hayne, "divested of the diplomatic garb in which it is invested, is, that we were bound by the confidence which had been imposed upon us by the Executive, (who kindly reminds us of what our usages are, what they ought to be, and that they ought not to be changed;) and while he leaves us free to act as we think proper, refuses to furnish us with the information on which alone we could act, and for which we had respectfully called."

Upon the same occasion, or shortly after, John Randolph, commenting upon the same message, makes use of the following language:

"If he would leave to the Senate the decision of the question, I would agree with him. But the evil genius of the American House of Stuart prevailed. He goes on to say, that the question 'involves a departure hitherto, so far as I am informed, without example, from that usage, and upon the motives for which, not being informed of them, I do not feel myself competent to decide.' If this had been prosecuted for a libel, what jury would have failed to have found a verdict on such an innendo that we were breaking up from our own usages, to gratify personal spleen? * * * Who made him a judge of our usages? Who made him the censor morum of this body? Above all, who made him the searcher of hearts, and gave him the right, by an innendo black as hell, to blacken our motives? Blacken our motives—I did

not say that then; I was more under self-command. * * * I said, if he could borrow the eye of Omniscience himself, and look into every bosom here—if he could look into that most awful, calamitous, and tremendous of all possible gulfs, the naked, unveiled human heart, stripped of all its coverings of self-love, exposed naked as to the eye of God,—I said if he could do that, he was not, as President of the United States, entitled to pass upon our motives, although he saw and knew them to be bad," &c.

Now, sir, (continued Mr. B.) I have but little comment to make myself upon this curious and very remarkable message. I leave its defence, if any can be set up, to that side of the House—to those gentlemen who have been smitten with such holy horror, such inexpressible wonderment, at the recent message of the present Executive—I leave it for them to say which of the two messages is the more rational in its refusal, which the more respectful in its tone. President Polk at least does not attempt to impugn our motives "by innendo black as hell," or otherwise; and I cannot be made to believe that the correspondence, instructions, and orders, from the Executive to Mr. Slidell, will not be deemed by every one not utterly blinded by prejudice or passion, equally as important and as necessary to be kept secret as were any of the documents or negotiations connected with the world-renowned mission to Panama.

Sir, we were not at war with Panama or any other portion of the world at that time. We were not then, as now, contending with barbarous and stubborn enemies, whose unholy cause and coward hearts are encouraged and sustained more by the factious grumbling and querulous complaining of party leaders against the conduct and policy of our Government, than by the valor of their own arms. The Senate did not require of the then Executive to publish to the world secret orders and instructions, whether or not, in his opinion, such publication would prove vitally injurious to the best interests of his country. The Senate did not then demand of the President to show his hand, in time of war, to his country's enemy, thereby enabling that enemy to mend his own hand preparatory to any future negotiations. No, sir, the Senate simply and most respectfully asked of the President—"the officer charged with all our negotiations"—to inform them whether, in his opinion, the publication of the documents would be prejudicial to the pending negotiations; and the President very cavalierly tells them to decide that question for themselves! Yet he himself, his friends and supporters, are unsparing and furious in their attacks upon the present Executive, because he declines to make public secret correspondence, orders, and instructions to our minister in time of war, and when it is daily anticipated that negotiations may be reopened between this country and Mexico!

Sir, it is not wonderful that men who daily deliver speeches, and utter sentiments, which cause the chief captains of the Mexican army at once to yield the palm of virulent detraction and bitter denunciation, and content themselves with merely reading these speeches and sentiments to their own troops, as the very surest method of inciting them to rage and revenge,—it is not wonderful that men who, day after day, declare to the wide world, that their country, by her recent conduct towards Mexico, has covered herself with degradation and disgrace,—who, imitating the example of those birds famous for "fouling their own nests," rise in their places and denounce the policy of their country as that of

a murderess, a colossal plunderer, who, scorning the puny bonds of human justice and human faith, deaf to the voice of mercy and humanity, trampling under foot all sacred obligations to God and man, heartless, remorseless, faithless, goaded on by the lust of plunder and the scent of blood, plants her polluted standard upon the ravished soil of a weak and unoffending sister, and, amidst the blood of martyrs and the tears of innocence, strives, with fiendish eagerness, to blot her very name from the roll of nations,—that men who daily declare that the cause of their country's present struggle is one upon which Eternal Justice must forever frown and that her actions are such as to condemn her over the whole civilized world,—it is not wonderful that these gentlemen, in their eagerness to stab the Executive, should strike, though they know they cannot reach him but by disregarding and spurning from them the illustrious example of the Father of his Country. Sir, the Moloch of party hesitates not to receive as a sacrifice the mangled reputation of the best and greatest; and I, for one, was but little surprised that the example of Washington should avail the President nothing against the attacks of the Opposition; but I was surprised—I did deem it wonderful, “passing strange”—that these gentlemen, in their mad haste to strike the President, should deal their blows upon their much-admired friend, the gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. ADAMS.] Every blow which they do strike at the present Executive falls with redoubled force upon the gentleman from Massachusetts. Compare the two messages, I repeat again, and I think it will be a curious mind which can condemn the one and applaud the other.

Sir, I wish to be distinctly understood in this matter. I make no attack upon the gentleman from Massachusetts; I do not condemn his conduct. I know that I have not the power (and I am sure I should be incapable of using it if I had) to detract in the slightest degree from his fame, whatever it may be. I doubt not that when he wrote the message which I have just read, there were reasons for so doing, which, to his mind, were all-sufficient; and I only ask that the same charity may be extended to the present Executive. I do not like the inconsistency of which gentlemen are guilty, when with one hand they draw the most hideous caricature of the President, and depict his conduct in the most hateful colors; and with the other hold up to light and glory their highly wrought portrait of the gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. ADAMS.] If that gentleman indeed be the “culminating star in the political firmament” which the gentleman from Mississippi [Mr. TOMPKINS] has described him, will not that gentleman admit, at once, that the brighter the star the brighter the example, and the more worthy to be followed? The gentleman praises the brilliancy of the star, but condemns those who walk by its light. Would he have that star “shorn of its beams” by frantic efforts to condemn the conduct of Mr. Polk? If not, I would advise him to bestow, in future, his eloquent denunciations upon some more vulnerable point of the President's policy. Let the gentleman compare his own bitter denunciation of the President's special message with the attacks of Hayne and Randolph upon that of the gentleman from Massachusetts, and I think he will be compelled to admit that his own is not more merited, and certainly

is not milder, than that of either of those distinguished gentlemen. Let him examine that portion of his own speech, where he says, “he should take this occasion to give his views in relation to that document sent to the House last week by the President of the United States, in which he refused to communicate to the Representatives of the people any of the facts, or of the particulars of the arrangement by which he restored to Mexico one of the ablest generals Mexico could ever boast, who found the country distracted, its armies disbanded, its revenues exhausted, yet out of this chaos, this anarchy, had organized armies, had brought forth resources, and covered, bathed as it were, the flowery plateau of Mexico with the richest blood of American soldiers! And when they asked how this occurred, they were told it was beyond the sphere of their duties and power; that to ask it was an impudent infringement of the Executive prerogative,” &c., &c. Let him examine the charges made in this portion of his speech, and I think he will be compelled to admit that he has done the President the greatest injustice. Sir, hundreds and thousands of copies of that eloquent gentleman's speech will shortly be circulated over the country—for speeches are made here as much for the people as for this body—and hundreds of thousands of innocent Whig voters, when they read it, will, in the simplicity of their hearts, actually believe that the President did dare to address to this House the language of which the gentleman from Mississippi has accused him. And thousands of others, if they do not believe that he used the very words above quoted, will believe that he said something very much like it. I am sure the gentleman from Mississippi must have read the special message hastily or carelessly. I do not believe he would do the President or any one else, not even his bitterest personal enemy, if he has any, the injustice to publish to the world sentiments, expressions, and opinions, which he never uttered or conceived. I am sure that I would not, sir, and I shall not believe the gentleman from Mississippi would. Sir, there is not to be found in the President's message one single word of which the gentleman has accused him in the extract which I have just read; nor can any one, by the most forced implication, extract from that message anything resembling the tone or language, or the substance or meaning, of what the gentleman has there so boldly charged. The President does not tell us that what we asked “is beyond the sphere of our duties and power;” he does not tell us that our inquiry “was an impudent infringement of the Executive prerogative;” he does not refuse to give us the information demanded of him, concerning the return of Santa Anna, upon whose skill and prowess as a general the gentleman has lavished large encomiums. On the contrary, he tells us *everything* connected with his return. He refers us to his message of 1846, in which he distinctly sets forth all the facts which were in his possession. Hear what the President does say to this portion of the call of Congress, and compare it with what the gentleman has charged him. He says:

“For further information relating to the return of Santa Anna to Mexico, I refer you to my annual message of December 8, 1846. The facts and considerations stated in that message induced the order of the Secretary of the Navy to the commander of our squadron in the Gulf of Mexico, a

copy of which is herewith communicated. This order was issued simultaneously with the order to blockade the coasts of Mexico, both bearing date the 13th of May, 1846—the day on which the existence of the war with Mexico was recognized by Congress. It was issued solely upon the views of policy presented in that message, and without any understanding on the subject, direct or indirect, with Santa Anna, or any other person."

Sir, could anything be plainer, could anything be more clear and explicit? Surely the gentleman would not require that the President should write out the whole of that portion of his annual message which refers to the return of Santa Anna, and send it to us in manuscript! He has referred us to that message; it is one of the records, one of the public documents of this House. All the information upon this point, in the possession of the President, and which was demanded by us, is there distinctly given, and we are respectfully requested by the President to turn to it, and read it. How, then, can the gentleman from Mississippi assert that the President refuses to inform us, and declares that our inquiry is "an impudent infringement of his prerogative."

But follow the gentleman further in his attack upon the President, and see if he has better foundation than that upon which his first charge stands.

The President relies upon the example set him by Washington as one well calculated to support his action and justify it to the world.

But the gentleman from Mississippi says:

"The message of Washington which was quoted, was in relation to the treaty-making power—a power conferred by the Constitution upon the President and Senate; and treaty negotiations, as recognized by the practice of European Governments for centuries had peculiarly the feature of secrecy. But we had lived long enough to know, that in a republican form of government, where there are not those who are born to govern, the people of the country are the true sovereigns, and where, like the true sovereigns in every country, they have a right, and it is their duty, to know everything that is going on. They require no public servants to keep secrets for them, because that which is concealed is generally disastrous to the public liberty," &c.

Now, I should like to know if the gentleman means seriously to contend, that because we are a Republic, because the people are sovereign, all our treaty negotiations with foreign Powers should, even in their inception, their very commencement, long before there is even a probability of their being satisfactorily concluded, be published to the world? Is it possible he means to insist, that because we are a Republic we should give all nations with whom we mean to negotiate the advantage of knowing every instruction, every secret order, every advice and direction which it may be deemed politic to give our own agent, commissioner, or minister? If he does, I will not stop now to show him how very ridiculous such a course of conduct would be, because to do so would be a waste of time and a work of supererogation. Or will the gentleman deny that the "instructions and orders issued to Mr. Slidell," a publication of which we demanded of the President, were connected with the "treaty-making power?" Was not Mr. Slidell sent to Mexico for the purpose of negotiating a treaty between that Republic and ourselves? and were not the instructions and orders given to him with a view of effecting that object? Even if the gentleman were correct in the position which he seems to have assumed, that republics require no secrecy, even in their treaty negotiations, still he must attack the precedent of

Washington, before he can affect the conduct of Mr. Polk; for we were as much a republic, the people were as "sovereign," it was as much "their right and duty to know all that was going on," during the administration of Washington, as under that of James K. Polk. Yet General Washington's idea of the people's "rights and duties" and of the "treaty-making power" differed very widely from that of the gentleman from Mississippi. The truth is, sir, the circumstances attending the call made upon General Washington, and his refusal to comply with it, were much less strong than those attending our recent call upon the present Executive. For in that case the negotiations had terminated—had closed; the "treaty had been concluded and ratified by the President and Senate." But have our negotiations with Mexico closed? The gentleman says, "it was true, when they looked back to the 'precedents, from the organization of the Government, in which the right to maintain secrecy was claimed, they found that they related only to negotiations then pending, and not to negotiations which had been consummated.'" Will he say that our negotiations with Mexico "have been consummated?" Does he not know that it is daily anticipated that they may be reopened? Have we effected any arrangement with Mexico? Has any treaty been confirmed and ratified by the President and Senate? No, sir; the gentleman knows this is not the case. And I repeat again, that his attack upon the President will be utterly harmless, until he has proved the example of Washington to be unworthy of imitation. So long as Washington shall be revered and loved for his wisdom, virtue, and patriotism, so long shall his illustrious example clothe the present Executive in "panoply of proof" which shall defy the puny shafts of party malignity.

So much, sir, for the gentleman's attack upon the special message of the President. Let us follow him in his remarks upon the policy of the Administration in the prosecution of the present war. He says: "They proposed to indemnify 'us for the lavish waste of treasure, but said 'nothing about human life, human suffering, human wretchedness—all the untold wo and mourning, tears and groans, that filled thousands of 'homes within our own land.'"

Sir, no one can regret this suffering, and wo, and wretchedness more than I do. I know the whole country regrets it. I know the Democratic party feels as much sympathy for the sufferers in this war, and I believe infinitely more, than those who are constantly denouncing them. But will the course of conduct pursued by the gentleman and his friends tend to terminate this struggle? Will the gentleman's unmeasured denunciation of the President tend to bring Mexico to terms? Does the gentleman propose any plan, any method, any policy by which this war may be brought to a speedy and honorable close? Would it not be more patriotic, wiser, and more statesmanlike, instead of wasting precious time in idle railing at the conduct of the Executive, to propose some policy, by the successful prosecution of which, our difficulties with Mexico might be brought to a close? When the gentleman shall come forward with such a proposition he will not find me backward in supporting him. Until he shall conceive and advance some policy preferable to that of the Administra-

tion, I sincerely hope he will cease to damn the Executive. I know of no proposition offered by the Opposition but that of withdrawing our forces, abandoning our conquests, retreating to the Nueces, or, possibly, to the Sabine, and thus tacitly admitting to the world that we have been all this while engaged in an unjust cause, which we dare no longer prosecute. Whether the gentleman from Mississippi would advise the adoption of this policy I am not informed. I hope he would not. I hope he knows enough of the American people to know that it is not in their nature to retrograde. "Go ahead!" is the maxim of our people, and it should be inscribed upon every banner that floats over them. As "General Taylor never surrenders," so his country never retreats. There is no retreat in our nature.

If the Whig party persist in urging this back- ing-out policy, I shall advise them to abandon the "coon," which they formerly adopted as the type of their party, and to adopt the crab or the crawfish. They are the only animals, I believe, that constantly move backwards or sidewise.

But the gentleman compares us to the Moors who overran Old Spain more than a thousand years ago, and intimates, that as the Spaniards ultimately expelled the Moors, and regained possession of their own country, so might we expect to fare in our occupancy of Mexico—it would "involve perpetual war," &c. How apt the comparison is between the Anglo-Saxon race of the present day and the Moors of the eighth century, or between the present degenerate inhabitants of Mexico and the chivalry of Spain under Ferdinand and Isabella, I shall leave to the gentleman himself to show. It is a task surpassing my own poor ability. But as he seems to think it was "more the subtlety of the Spanish Jesuits than the Spanish sword that subjected the Aztec race to Spanish rule," I will remind him that there is a Yankee subtlety—"cuteness" and cunning—much more effective in accomplishing any given object than the subtlety of Spanish Monk or Jesuit. I do not know whether it will be necessary for us to hold possession of Mexico. But if we do, I will venture the prediction that it will not be ten years (I believe I might say *five*) before the operation of our institutions, and the spirit of our government amongst them, will cause province after province to sue and beg for admission into our Union.

But the gentleman's boldest assertion, and the one which has least foundation in fact of all those which he has made against the Executive, is contained in the following words:

"Herrera's government had been friendly to the United States and to peace. The revolution which placed him in power was the only one which Mexico had known for some time, that did leap from the hearts of the people; it was a popular exertion which had overthrown a military despotism. And yet our Executive would not permit that government, thus friendly to our claims and to peace, to exist; but by the embarrassment he pushed upon it, and plotting for the restoration of Santa Anna, overthrew Herrera, and placed the affairs of Mexico in the hands of a bitter enemy of the United States."

Sir, when I heard the distinguished gentleman from Mississippi pronounce the grave and bold charge which I have just read, I listened attentively for the proof—the facts by which he meant to sustain it. It is a most serious charge, and one which no man has a right to make against another, whether he be President or private citizen, unless he can produce the proof to sustain it. The Presi-

dent is accused of "pressing embarrassment upon and striving to overthrow the only administration in Mexico friendly to his own country, and of plotting for the return of Santa Anna, a bitter enemy of the United States." And yet the gentleman who made this heavy charge has failed to adduce one shadow of evidence in support of it! He has produced no evidence, because he could produce none, for none such existed!

By what means did the President seek to "embarrass the administration of Herrera?" He dispatched a minister to treat with that Administration after he had been assured a minister would be received. He sent a messenger of peace, in the earnest hope that he would be able to accommodate all difficulties between ourselves and Mexico. If this act were sufficient to overthrow the only Mexican Administration which had "sprung from the hearts of the people," what becomes of the assertions of the Opposition, that there would have been no war but for the march of our forces to the Rio Grande? If the bare effort at negotiation upon our part was sufficient to overthrow the most popular government of Mexico, how, by possibility, could we ever have come to terms with her but by first thrashing her into reason and decency!

Sir, in what a wretched dilemma do the Whigs place themselves in their heedless effort to pull down the present Administration! With one breath they abuse the President for sending a minister of peace to Mexico, and call it "pressing embarrassment" upon the friendly administration of Herrera; with the next they denounce him for ordering our army to the Rio Grande, and call it a wanton invasion of the peaceful territory of a sister republic!

But the President aided to overthrow Herrera by "plotting for the return of Santa Anna." Does not the gentleman from Mississippi know that there was no order issued to permit Santa Anna to pass our squadron until more than four months after the downfall of Herrera's government? Does he not know, that "on the 30th of December, 1845, General Herrera resigned the Presidency and yielded up the government to General Paredes, 'without a struggle;' and that the order to suffer Santa Anna to pass our fleet did not issue until the 13th of May, 1846, four months and a half afterwards? With what face, then, can the gentleman charge that the President, "plotting the return of Santa Anna," overthrew the government of Herrera? The President gives us, in his annual message of 1846, the reasons, at length, which induced him, not to plot the return of Santa Anna, but to suffer him to pass our fleet, in case he should voluntarily attempt to return. And, in my opinion, the reasons there given are masterly and conclusive.

He says: "Our object was the restoration of peace, and, with this view, no reason was perceived why we should take part with Paredes, and aid him by means of our blockade in preventing the return of his rival to Mexico. On the contrary, it was believed that the intestine division which ordinary sagacity could not but anticipate as the fruit of Santa Anna's return to Mexico, and his contest with Paredes, might strongly tend to produce a disposition with both parties to restore and secure peace with the United States. Paredes was a soldier by profession, and a monarchist in principle. He had but recently before

' been successful in a military revolution, by which he had obtained power. He was the sworn enemy of the United States, with which he had involved his country in the existing war. Santa Anna had been expelled from power by the army, was known to be in open hostility to Paredes, and publicly pledged against foreign intervention and the restoration of monarchy in Mexico. * * Had Paredes remained in power, it is morally certain that any pacific adjustment would have been hopeless."

The President gives other reasons upon this subject, but I think what I have read is sufficient to convince all who are not resolved to remain dissatisfied with everything the President has done or shall do.

The gentleman from Mississippi says:

"Just before the return of Santa Anna, our glorious chief-tain, General Taylor, whose skill and intrepidity as a general were equalled by the clearness of his head and the greatness and goodness of his heart, had met the Mexican forces and overthrown them on the bank of the Rio Grande."

But he does not tell us that it was the same patriotic and sensible man who *advised* the march of our army to the Rio Grande; who more than once urged the necessity of taking up a position on or near that river, and whose sensible advice it was that the Administration followed in that matter. I thought it would have been more appropriate had the gentleman's praise of General Taylor been introduced just after that portion of his speech where he thinks we should be no party men, where he says: "It seemed to him that upon this point they should not be divided into Whigs and Democrats; that they ought to know no party but their country."

The gentleman had scarcely concluded his praise of General Taylor, before he treated us to an extravagant laudation of the military character of Santa Anna; and really, to judge from his remarks upon the two, one would be induced to believe that the Mexican, in his opinion, is the greater general of the two. He says of Santa Anna: "He was a general of skill, of exhaustless resources, of mind and energy of action, who could strike out of chaos the means to prosecute the war with vigor." Why, sir, one would hardly suppose that this eulogium was pronounced upon the same Santa Anna whose whole force General Houston overthrew and routed with a mere handful of men;

who, on that occasion, outstripped the fleetest runaway among his own officers—fled fifteen miles, until his horse bogged down in a quagmire, then "took it afoot"—fled through the swamps and prairie-grass, to the Brazos timber, and was finally discovered snugly ensconced "in the forks of a large live-oak"—at least this is the account of the affair, as I find it in Niles's Register. We would hardly believe that this is the same man who was one of the very first to fly at Cerro Gordo, and who took his departure in such haste that he left one of his legs behind him. Yet this wretched coward is extolled by the gentleman as a general of skill and energy, who could strike out of chaos the means to prosecute the war with vigor, &c. Sir, when the gentleman's speech shall reach Mexico—for reach there it will, as sure as heaven's sun shines upon us—when Santa Anna shall see his own praise as pronounced by the gentleman from Mississippi, I doubt not he will, at least, believe himself a great general, the innumerable drubbings he has received to the contrary notwithstanding. In the language of the author whom the gentleman quoted more than once in his speech, he will no doubt exclaim—

"My dukedom to a beggarly denier
I do mistake my person all this while;
For, by my life, he finds, though I cannot,
Myself to be a marvellous proper man."

Sir, the gentleman and his party are very welcome to all the capital they can make out of the return of Santa Anna. The people know that he is a wretched poltroon, with capacity just sufficient to conduct a cock-fight, and with influence enough to "kick up a row" in his own country; but whom even the gentleman's ingenuity cannot magnify into a mighty captain.

Sir, the Whig party used to furnish us some very tolerable sport in beating them before the people. We used to have some very interesting contests; they fighting, it is true, just hard enough to get beaten, but still with energy enough to make the struggle exciting; and I was looking forward with much pleasure to the coming contest next summer and fall. But really, if they persevere in the course which they have commenced here, I am afraid we will have little or nothing to do; their conduct will arouse a whirlwind of popular wrath, which will sweep them from the very face of the earth!





WERT
BOOKBINDING
Grannville, Pa.
Jan. - Feb. 1969
We're Quality Bound

